

Speech from the Throne

and take the manpower pool available in the province into training programs to prepare them. We must ensure that the manpower in the province of Newfoundland gets top priority for the jobs which will be created on these oil drilling projects. Instead of allowing over 18 per cent of the Newfoundland work force to lay idle, would it not be better to train them and provide them with skills for the manpower market which will open up when these oil finds are being worked?

Since some of my colleagues have developed their own theses on the problems of unemployment insurance, I will offer just one thought. It is time the government came clean with regard to the incredible mess that has developed within the UIC offices during the last few months. I challenge the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey) or his parliamentary secretary to go to Southern Harbour, or to Arnold's Cove or to places on the Cape Shore and try to tell the people there this poppycock that only a few benefits were held up because of bureaucratic error. This is obviously not the case. An interdepartmental bulletin signed by the chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Commission has made this quite clear. If I may, I will quote rule No. 5 as dictated by the chairman of the UIC and circulated to all UIC employees. This is a directive issued to employees of the commission by their chairman:

No one shall declare to claimants and/or their representatives that files have been lost, that documents cannot be traced, that the system is complex, that the computer is at fault, that there has been clerical error, or any other similar excuses, which, no matter how valid they may be, do not in any way help the claimant and perpetuate an atmosphere of doubt in the minds of claimants and employees.

The Prime Minister and some of his ministers have been boasting of the record number of housing starts in 1971. Well, we laud that accomplishment, Mr. Speaker; but let the government not rest on its laurels. There is still a crying need in this country for housing. We are barely scratching the surface. It is about time the government started recognizing the problems of our average and low-income families, those people who have been caught in the economic squeeze. In the city of St. John's a large number of our people are in this category. They are too well off to qualify for direct government assistance, but not sufficiently well off to avail themselves of mortgage financing under the National Housing Act. Many of these people live in houses which could be rehabilitated, with government assistance, thereby ensuring that the character of our downtown area would be preserved, while at the same time providing decent places in which to live and raise families.

More than three years ago the minister then responsible for housing, the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) imposed a freeze on urban renewal, recognizing that the bulldozer approach was not the right one. Since then the downtown cores of our cities have been allowed to continue their downward spiral of rot and decay, until many of them have gone beyond the point of no return.

The time has come for an end to the multiplicity of studies. The time has come to make decisions and take action. I hope this action will reflect the studies and correct previous mistakes. Urban renewal has in too many cases resulted in chaos. The Blackhead Road urban renewal scheme is a very good example of this. Frustra-

tion, confusion and chaos were the results of that scheme. Families were uprooted, lives were endangered, the people's rights were ignored by strong-arm bureaucrats who showed little willingness to recognize the human factors involved.

The federal government in co-operation with the other two levels of government, provincial and municipal, should undertake a long-range study of land needs in St. John's and establish a land bank to ensure that an adequate supply of serviced building lots is available to accommodate the natural growth of our city and the future needs of prospective new home builders. Such a land bank would also have the effect of stabilizing land prices, would discourage speculation and resultant exorbitant prices for serviced land.

The Speech from the Throne was not the only forlorn document to come out last week, Mr. Speaker; on the same day Statistics Canada issued the cost of living figures for the major metropolitan areas in Canada. My city, St. John's, had the dubious distinction of having shown the largest increase in the cost of living in January, a hike of just under 1 per cent. That was not simply a monthly fluctuation, as the former Minister of Finance used to say: unfortunately, this has been a trend for consumers in St. John's. The cost of living went up 4.6 per cent in the last 12 months in St. John's.

• (1750)

How do we expect our senior citizens, who in their declining years have to pinch pennies and live on a budget that is barely able to keep body and soul together today, to live with a 4.6 per cent increase in the cost of living on a pension that allows them only a 2 per cent increase to compensate? That is a harsh indictment of a government that almost gloats that it has no compassion.

I spoke earlier of the need for a new deal for Newfoundland in confederation. Nowhere is this more evident than in our dealings with Canadian National Railways. Canadian National pulled its railway passenger service out of the province in 1969 despite the objections of almost all the people of the province. The Canadian transport Commission agreed to allow CNR to abandon the service because it was losing almost \$1 million a year.

Yet two weeks ago this same Transport Commission refused to allow Canadian National and Canadian Pacific to abandon their rail passenger service between Montreal and the Maritimes, thus creating a situation where the Canadian taxpayer will be called upon to subsidize it to the tune of \$1 million a month. I am not arguing that this decision is a wrong one; as a matter of fact I think it is correct. But every argument that is used to retain rail passenger service in the Maritimes is also valid in Newfoundland.

My time, Mr. Speaker, is almost up, so I say this in conclusion. I make no apology for perhaps being a little too partisan in my address today. There is no member of this House of Commons who wants confederation to succeed more than I, who wants this great nation of ours to prosper and to grow and to provide for its people a standard of living that is unrivalled by any other.

As a Newfoundlander born and bred in the hardship and strife of a country that refused to lay down and die,